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Berzi, Matteo

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# Local Cross-Border Cooperation as a Territorial Strategy for Peripheral Borderlands? The Analysis of Two Study Cases along the Eastern French-Spanish Border Using the Territorialist Approach.

MATTEO BERZI

## Abstract

This contribution applies the Territorialist Approach (TA) in order to analyse cross-border cooperation in two areas located along the Eastern French-Spanish border. TA is an innovative, multi-disciplinary and culturally oriented approach for territorial studies, which is rooted in the Italian school of geography. According to this approach, “territory” is perceived as the result of a longstanding cyclical process of interaction between human settlements and the environment, whereby each civilization ‘stores’ a set of tangible (artefacts) as well as intangible (meanings, values and symbols) assets that drive local relations and shape the local identity (the milieu). Therefore, we regard cross-border territories as complex territorial units, wherein geographical, socioeconomic and cultural patterns have been affected by the evolution of border functions and by the changes in national, international and sub-national policies. In this sense, local cross-border networks, both formal and informal, contribute in keeping a shared local *milieu*. At the same time, in Europe, local Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC) is boosted by European integration processes by means of political, financial and legal support. It represents an opportunity for local agents to develop joint actions for the endogenous enhancement of the borderland. In this sense, the local milieu represents a very important factor for generating local development. The two case studies were conducted in Cerdanya and the Coast of Albera Marítima (CAM). Our analysis on Cerdanya demonstrates how community-led initiatives, which are based on local needs and the shared territorial capital, represent a feasible alternative for local development. The case of the Albera is geographically even more peripheral, wherein the absence of stable cross-border local networks, on the one hand, and of feasible CBC projects, on the other, exacerbates its geographic remoteness and the anthropic pressures on the fragile coastal environment.

*Cross-Border Cooperation; Borderland; Territorialistic Approach; Cerdanya; Albera Marítima; Milieu; Local endogenous development*

## Zusammenfassung

**Örtliche grenzüberschreitende Zusammenarbeit als Territorialstrategie für Grenzregionen? Untersuchung von zwei Fallstudien entlang der östlichen Grenze zwischen Frankreich und Spanien unter Verwendung des territorialen Ansatzes**

Der Beitrag befasst sich mit dem Territorialansatz in der Raumentwicklung zur Untersuchung der grenzübergreifenden Zusammenarbeit in zwei Gebieten an der östlichen französisch-spanischen Grenze. Es ist ein neuer, fachübergreifender und kulturorientierter Ansatz für Studien zur Raumentwicklung, der seine Wurzeln in der italienischen Geographieschule hat. Danach ist „Territorium“ das Ergebnis eines lange währenden zyklischen Prozesses des Zusammenspiels zwischen menschlichen Siedlungen und der Umgebung, wobei jede Zivilisation eine Reihe von materiellen (Artefakte) und immateriellen (Bedeutungen, Werte und Symbole) Werten bewahrt, die die lokalen Beziehungen fördert und die lokale Identität (das Milieu) formt. Deshalb sehen wir Grenzregionen als komplizierte räumliche Einheiten, in denen geographische, sozio-ökonomische und kulturelle Verhaltensmuster durch die Entwicklung von Grenzfunktionen und Veränderungen der nationalen, internationalen und regionalen Politik beeinflusst worden sind. Sowohl formelle als auch informelle grenzüberschreitende Netzwerke tragen zur Erhaltung eines gemeinsamen lokalen Milieus bei. In Europa wird die grenzüberschreitende Zusammenarbeit durch politische, finanzielle und rechtliche Fördermaßnahmen gestärkt. Sie bietet für lokale Vermittler eine Möglichkeit zum Ausbau gemeinsamer Maßnahmen zur endogenen Stärkung des Grenzgebiets. Die Untersuchung zu Cerdanya zeigt, wie von der Gemeinde geleitete Initiativen, die auf lokalen Bedürfnissen und dem gemeinsamen räumlichen Kapital beruhen, eine machbare Alternative zur lokalen Entwicklung darstellen. Die Küste von Albera Marítima (CAM) dagegen liegt geographisch eher abseits, wobei das Fehlen grenzübergreifender lokaler Netzwerke einerseits und machbarer Projekte der grenzübergreifenden Zusammenarbeit andererseits seine geographische Abseitslage und den anthropischen Druck auf die sensible Küstenregion verschärfen.

*Grenzübergreifende Zusammenarbeit; Grenzland; Territorialer Ansatz; Cerdanya; Albera Marítima; Milieu; lokale endogene Entwicklung*

## Introduction

This contribution aims to show the application of the “Territorialist Approach” (TA) to two borderlands located across the Franco-Spanish border. TA is an innovative and culturally oriented approach for territorial studies that began in the mid-1980s and was developed by an international and interdisciplinary group of scholars. In 2010 this multi-disciplinary group founded the Territorialist Society, which is a non-profit organisation that encourages scientific discussions on the theoretical and methodological focus on territory. According to their manifesto, the “territory” is conceived as a highly complex living system, resulting from a “long standing coevolutionary processes between human settlements and the environment” ... “constantly transformed by the cultural project of each civilization” (MAGNAGHI 2011, p. 3). The processes of territorialisation eventually produce the *milieu*. According to GOVERNA (1997), the milieu not only represents the foundation of a specific local collective identity, but also the development of the endogenous potentials of the territory. The local territorial network adapts the global inputs to the local context, so as not to irreversibly alter the milieu, thereby starting the beneficial processes of endogenous local development. Many global inputs, such as economic globalization, are inducing de-territorialisation processes at the local scale, unbinding the functions of a place. It increases, for example, the fragility and the vulnerability of the territories towards the current social and environmental changes (MAGNAGHI 2001). In this paper, we try to apply it to the study of borderlands, where the local socioeconomic and cultural patterns are directly affected by presence of a border. Following the TA approach, the borderland could be perceived as a special territory with its own milieu and identity. Since the end of 19th century, the territorialities of nation-states have induced deep social, cultural and territorial changes in borderlands (ANDERSON a. O'DOWD 1999). Nevertheless, borderlanders have been able to take advantage of the real

conditions of living on the border and develop economic, cultural and political cross-border neighbouring interactions. Local agents cooperate in order to face common needs, enhance their *local milieu* and design joint territorial actions (PERKMANN 2003). Since the 1990s, the EU's cohesion policies are supporting this kind of interaction by means of the Interreg programmes, and more recently by introducing the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC), a specific cross-border legal framework<sup>1</sup>.

The hypothesis argued in this contribution is that new cycles of local cross-border re-territorialisation could begin along the EU borderlands, according to historical and geographical contexts. Two case studies located along the eastern French-Spanish border have been selected for a comparative analysis. These are the mountain micro-region of Cerdanya and the Coast of Albera Marítima (hereafter: CAM), which is located on the easternmost extension of the Pyrenees. Between these two borderlands share an important local *milieu*: the Catalan culture and heritage, historical common landscape as well as traditional and current socioeconomic activities. They also face similar problems, such as remoteness, the lack of infrastructures, services and the decline of traditional activities, such as agriculture and fishery. CBC started in both cases at the beginning of the 1980s to promote a more integrated vision of the borderland. Nevertheless, the results of CBC process of the two case studies are notably different. The structure of the contribution is as follows. Firstly, the theoretical framework is exposed, focusing on TA and its adaptation to borderlands. Secondly, a brief overview of the French-Spanish border is presented, focusing on the historical framework and the institutionalization of cross-border cooperation in the region. Thirdly, the mixed qualitative and quantitative methodology is explained. Finally,

the two case studies are analysed to identify the common *milieu* of the two borderlands and assess the involvement of local actors in CBC. These elements lead to the comparative discussion and some final remarkable conclusions regarding the application of TA in the borderlands.

## A Territorialist Approach to Borderlands

The first section discusses the theoretical approach. It briefly starts with some background considerations about the current expansion of border studies and focuses on the institutionalisation of CBC in the European Union. The concept of territory is therefore explained according to the Territorialist Approach and it is adapted to the real conditions of borderlands.

## The Border Studies Background

Before explaining the theoretical approach, some background information should be briefly outlined. Firstly, border studies are recently undergoing a phase of considerable expansion (HOUTUM 2000). Many scholars in social sciences such as, geography, anthropology, sociology, ethnography, economic disciplines, political science, international relations, etc. are increasingly interested in the topic of borders, especially on their socioeconomic, spatial, cultural and political impacts at local and regional scales (PAASI 1996; MARTINEZ 2002; KAPLAN a. HÄKLI 2002; WILSON a. DONNAN 2012). Geographers and political scientists specifically focus on cross-border cooperation processes, its multiple forms, scales and types of governance (PERKMANN 2003). Secondly, economic globalisation is pushing nation-states into a process of re-scaling (BRENNER 1999), i.e. toward a reorganisation and redistribution of power to other sub-national entities, such as regional and local authorities as well as to supra-national entities, i.e. the European Union. Thirdly, the increasingly new regionalist dynamics (SHAW a. SÖDERBAUM 2003; AMIN 2004) produces new forms of territorial governance at both a macro scale (the EU) and micro scale (the establishment of the ‘Euroregions’) that is

<sup>1</sup> The European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) is a legal instrument introduced by the European Commission to support the cross-border cooperation and the cross-border institution-building process for the public administrations (Reg. EC 1082/2006).

mainly based on the multilevel approach (HOOPER a. KRAMSCH 2004). Fourthly, in the current process of European integration, local and regional CBC is gaining an important role in the political and in the institutional agendas (BUFON 1993; ANDERSON a. O'DOWD 1999; PAASI 2003). Specifically, EU policies and programmes (i.e. Interreg) are boosting new territorial synergies through the empowerment of local actors. Furthermore, the growing academic and institutional interest in cross-border spatial planning is boosting rethinking processes of new territorial strategies (COLOMB 2007; DÜHR et al. 2010; JANIN RIVOLIN 2010; PAASI a. ZIMMERBAUER 2015). These dynamics emphasise that nowadays national borders get a central place in the academic debate, particularly their meaning, functions (O'Dowd 2001) and perception from multiple actors (PAASI 1996, 2003).

### The Concept of Territory: A Territorialist Approach

The theoretical approach is based on re-elaborating and adapting the concept of territory, and consequently, the one of local endogenous development according to the Territorialist Approach (TA). It is an innovative cultural-geographic approach developed by an international and interdisciplinary group of scholars, who conceived territory as "a common good with its own historic, cultural, social, environmental identity, considering landscape as its visible manifestation" (MAGNAGHI 2011, p. 1). The significance and relation between the territory and the local development concepts has been widely studied, among others, by DEMATTEIS (1995), TURCO (1988), GOVERNA (1997) and MAGNAGHI (2001).

According to these scholars, the territory represents a cultural-historical process, in which local communities produce tangible (artifacts) as well as intangible (meanings, values, symbols) assets that constantly interact with a specific environment. Through several territorialising actions (MAGNAGHI 2001), this *human environment* takes its own aspect, physiognomy and character, i.e. a unique and

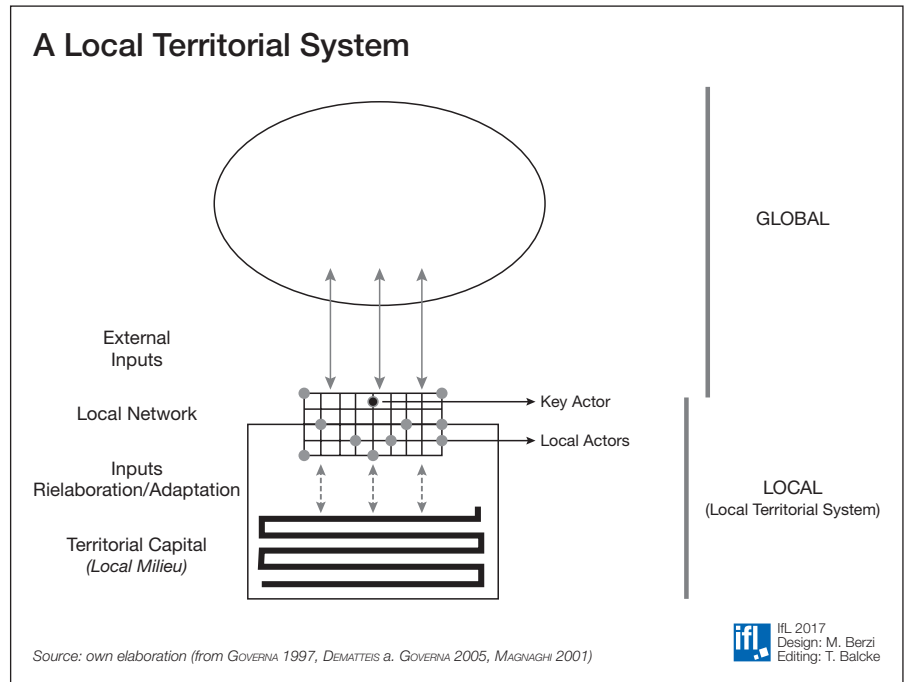


Fig. 1: A Local Territorial System

exclusive identity (TURCO 1988). One of the most noticeable outputs is, for example, the landscape. The morphological alteration and the adoption of specific construction techniques in urban, rural, and coastal environments are also "charged up" with aesthetic, symbolic and spiritual values. In short, the territory is the result of a co-evolutionary process between the anthropic and the natural environments, which acquires a certain autonomy and complexity (Ibid.). It is conceived in a system that grows, evolves, expands, decays, dies and is reborn, thereby generating a constant dialectic between anthropogenic communities that continue to build it. The territory is part of a cyclical process where each civilization "stores" a set of physical and cultural patterns, enriching the local milieu in the long term. Dematteis defines the milieu as "a permanent series of socio-cultural features that have sedimented in a given geographical area through the historical evolution of intersubjective relationships which are in relation to the use of local natural ecosystems" (quoted in POLLICE 2003, p. 108). Therefore, the milieu represents an important endogenous resource inside the local developmental process. Indeed as DEMATTEIS and GOVERNA state (2005),

networked local communities start beneficial and innovative territorial processes, adapting and filtering the global inputs (economic, cultural, political, etc.) within their Local Territorial System (LTS) in order to avoid an irreversible alteration of their own milieu (GOVERNA 1997). As schematized in Figure 1, local development is generated in this constant and double dialectic between the global-local scales, on the one hand, and the innovation-identity processes, on the other.

### The Concept of Cross-Border Territory

Here the notion of territory is applied to borderlands, or rather in a territory that has been directly affected by a superimposition of a national border. As the result of geopolitical and historical factors, the border induced the fragmentation of the ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic pre-existing patterns (ANDERSON a. O'DOWD 1999). Once the border has been established, the new political order introduces new normative and social codes, and from the local perspective, it brought new deterritorializing processes that threaten the reproduction of the local milieu. These dynamics have become stronger since the late nineteenth century when nation-state



ideologies were emerging and reinforcing a sense of belonging to the nation (SAHLINS 1989). As GUICHONNET and RAFFESTIN state: “the border reshape and reorganize the social space” (1974, p. 46). However borderlanders have been able to benefit in several ways from the presence of the border. Some examples are represented by illegal trade relations, such as smuggling, the reaffirmations of some “pre-border” historical rights for breeders, fishermen, or enduring family ties. In O’Dowd’s view, local communities reinterpret the border according to three main senses: an administrative and political barrier that limits neighbouring interactions, a resource for the economic exchanges, and a symbol of local identity (O’Dowd 2001). In analysing USA-Mexico cross-border interactions, MARTINEZ argues the existence of a particular local milieu, i.e. the borderland milieu (MARTINEZ 2002). It is conceived as a unique environmental and social framework that is characterised by a set of circumstances, such as separateness, otherness, transnationalism, etc.

Trying to combine the TA to the border studies literatures, we argue that the new cycles of local cross-border re-territorialisation could start along the EU borderlands. In Europe, local CBC is supported by the European Territorial Cooperation policy, which provides the financial and legal instruments to promote joint projects that strengthen cross-border relations among borderland communities. In view of the historical and the geographical contexts, local CBC, which is based on the enhancement of *local milieu* and the empowerment of social and institutional networks, represents a suitable strategy for facing common challenges, and realising territorial integration (SOHN 2014). Nevertheless, CBC often requires the support of regional and state authorities, such as those in transport, telecommunication and health care services. Indeed multi-level governance is an important process that gives effectiveness, feasibility and durability to CBC (HOOPER a. KRAMSCH 2004). Specifically, such a process is vital in peripheral borderlands, which mostly

lack accessibility and public services, and where uneven economic development is apparent. In this sense, several types of territorial projects could be designed and implemented across the border. For instance, such projects were already initiated in the French-Spanish border. Some examples include the implementation of a health functional area in Cerdanya (BERZI a. DURÀ 2015), the touristic districts along the Pyrenees (BLASCO et al. 2014), or the cross-border integration of Basque urban areas on the Atlantic side of the Pyrenees.

### Objectives of the Study and Methodological Approach

The methodology aims to analyse the most relevant territorial and social dynamics of two peripheral borderlands located in the Eastern Pyrenees across the French-Spanish border, in this case, Cerdanya and the Coast of Albera Marítima, so as to critically discuss the limits and potentialities of the current and future local CBC. The analysis focuses on characterising the common *milieu* as well as identifying the local cross-border network. The methodology combines quantitative and qualitative analysis, which relies on a broad set of sources: a) academic references, such as investigations of SAHLINS (1989), MONCUSÍ (2005) and OLIVERAS (2013) for Cerdanya and the works of BARBAZA (1966), AGUIRRE (2013) and LLORET and RIVERA (2008) for the Coast of Albera Marítima; b) institutional sources for statistical data (IFREMER 2014; IDESCAT 2015) and the databases of CBC programmes (Poctefa 2007–2013, Interreg IIIA EFA 2000–2006 and the Regional Funds for cross-border micro-projects)<sup>2</sup>; c) fieldwork for conducting 20 semi-structured interviews with local and regional actors belonging to the public administration (representative of the counties, mayors, tourist officials) as well as private stakeholders (tourist accommodations and representatives of local economic activities, such as fishery for CAM). Local sources have also

been consulted. The information has been catalogued in databases for statistical and cartographic analysis. Data processing allows us to highlight the existence of a local cross-border milieu from a historical and geographical perspective as well as the involvement of local stakeholders in cross-border cooperation.

### A General Overview of the French-Spanish border

The French-Spanish border is considered one of the oldest and stablest in Europe (SAHLINS 1989). Since 1659 it separates the Northern and Southern sides of the Pyrenees. However, it took a further two centuries to establish the official international boundary with the Treaties of Bayonne (1856–1868). The historical and geographical justification of the border was prompted by the two emerging nation-states, which imposed a new paradigm over the secular trans-Pyrenean dominions, such as the Crown of Aragon (to the east) or Navarra (to the west), which did not recognise the mountain ranges as a boundary (Ibid.). Local mountain communities were generally extraneous to the nationalist logic, the uplands were considered to be *the* place of socioeconomic relations (BRUNET 2002; SALSA 2007). Traditional agreements regulated the relationship among the local communities. Examples are the *faceries or lie et passerie* in the central-western Pyrenees (JAURIETA 2004) as well as the historical fishing rights for the Basque communities in the Gulf of Biscay and the Catalan fishermen in the Gulf of Lion (RODRIGUEZ a. FABRI 1989). The advancing national ideologies at the end of the nineteenth century and the Franco dictatorship in the twentieth century heightened the perception of the border as a barrier. However, important changes during the late 1970s in Spain, namely the return of democracy, the adoption of the Spanish Constitution and the institution of the Autonomous Communities, led to the rebirth and recultivation of cross-border relationships. The cultural as well as the linguistic continuities across the border represent two important catalysts for local and regional

<sup>2</sup> Respectively: Cross-Border Operative Programme of France-Spain-Andorra, Interreg Spain-France-Andorra and the Micro-Projects Funds for the Eurodistrict of the Catalan Cross-Border Space.

CBC in the Pyrenees, especially in the Basque-speaking and Catalan-speaking borderlands (HÄKLI 2004; BECK 2008). Since the 1980s, the engagement of local and regional authorities in CBC has been encouraged by important institutional and financial European initiatives, such as the entry of Spain into the European Economic Community, the adoption of the Madrid Convention (COE 1980), the implementations of the Schengen Agreement, Interreg programmes and the EGCT. Along the French-Spanish border, many cross-border institutions are active today: at a regional scale, there is the Euroregion Pyrénées-Méditerranée on the eastern side and the Euroregion Aquitaine-Euskadi-Navarra on the western side. Also two sub-regional entities were involved, namely the Eurodistrict of the Catalan Cross-Border Space and the EGTC Huesca-Haute Pyrenees. Other active local structures include the Basque Eurocity, Consorcio Bidasoa-Txingudi, EGTC Pirineus-Cerdanya, etc.

### Evidences of Local Cross-Border Integration in Cerdanya

Cerdanya, which is a mountain micro-region of about 1000 km<sup>2</sup>, is divided between the Haute Cerdagne in France (Région Occitanie Pyrénées-Méditerranée) and the Baixa Cerdanya in the Spanish region of Catalonia (Fig. 2). All over Cerdanya, which is an area that can be considered an eminently cross-border space, there are no elements of physical disruptions (VILA 1984; SAHLINS 1989; MANCEBO 1999). Despite the limits imposed by the national political order with the enforcement of the Treaty of the Pyrenees, communal law between local communities continued to regulate the management of local resources on both sides of the border (MONCUSÌ 2005) in the form of a local council, who took joint decisions concerning breeding, pastures and water uses. The two side of Cerdanya shared trade exchanges, legally as well as illegally (smuggling of dairy products, tobacco, etc.). Nation-state interventions created mental and psychological barriers between the French and Spanish's

sides in the daily life, which further deteriorated social cohesion (SAHLINS 1989; MONCUSÌ 2005). During the 1970s, the valley underwent an important urban development, whereby the accompanying processes constantly increased the number of second homes and the growth of low-density urbanisations that spread throughout the valley and modified the typical landscape (the Cerdan enclosure). Nowadays tourism and the construction industry are the most important economic activities that promote important cross-border mobility. According to the president of the Catalan County Council (Consell Comarcal de la Cerdanya, CCC), whom we interviewed, and the President of the French Community of Municipality (Communauté de Communes Pyrénées-Cerdagne, CCPC), the labour market is highly interdependent, in that local workers frequently seek employment or business on the other side of the border, especially in the areas of tourism, services and construction industry. Furthermore, as a result of shopping activities in the local weekly markets, the local population frequently moves between both sides of the border. Therefore, it can be assumed that the uniformity of the territory, the similarities of the socio-economic system and cultural homogeneity of Cerdanya before and after the appearance of the border, are important factors for a longstanding CBC tradition.

### Toward a Stable Institutional Cooperation

Institutional cross-border cooperation initiatives in Cerdanya began in the 1980s. In 1991, 43 of the 50 municipalities of the valley founded the Association of Municipalities of Cerdanya (AMC). The association strived to promote CBC in sectors such as tourism, environment, infrastructure, transport, health and culture. The AMC also promoted the *Diada de la Cerdanya* (Cerdanya Day), an annual day of conferences and events, where French and Catalan local institutions, together with the citizens, discuss common needs and potential initiatives (i.e. Interreg projects). In the late 1990s, during one *Diada*

*de la Cerdanya*, the Font-Romeu Manifesto was approved to build a stronger local political cohesion. Consequently, the Grand Council of Cerdanya was established between the CCC and the CCPC (OLIVERAS 2013). Since 2009 they adopted a new flag symbolizing their union. The aforementioned entities established the EGTC Pirineus-Cerdanya in 2011 to promote joint territorial actions for tourism, local economy and culture. During the official conferences, Catalan is the main language, even if French and Spanish are also spoken. Although some French public officials are not native Cerdans and do not speak Catalan, they nevertheless claim to understand it. Indeed, according to the President we interviewed as well as the Vice President of the EGTC Pirineus-Cerdanya state, the language does not represent an insurmountable barrier for local cross-border cooperation.

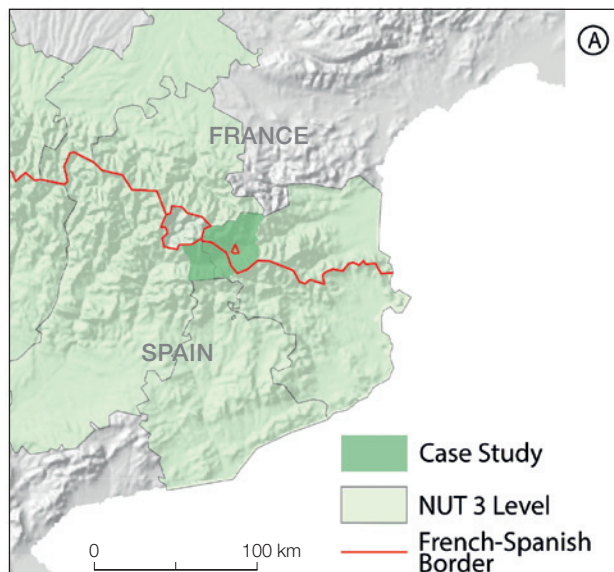
### A Multi-Sectorial Cooperation

Local CBC in Cerdanya is applied to several sectors. In this section, we report on some important and successful initiatives.

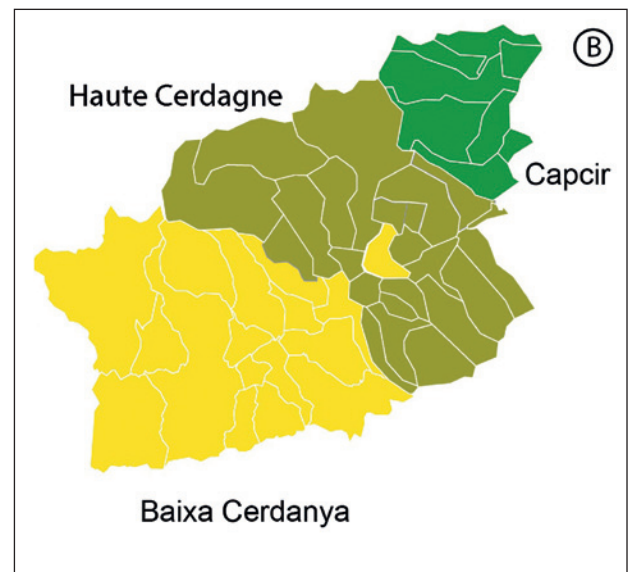
The joint environmental management includes a number of initiatives (OLIVERAS 2013). One of the first joint actions was the realisation of the water treatment plant in Puigcerdà in 1989 (Ibid.), which was advocated by the AMC and financed by Interreg I (1989–1994). This project continued in Interreg II (1994–1999) and currently eleven border municipalities are connected to the sewerage system. A few years later a nearby wastewater treatment plant was also built. In 2004 the Segre cross-border river was subjected to a joint management plan, between the CCC, the closer Consell Comarcal de l'Alt Urgell and the CCPC with the Interreg IIIA funding. The aim of the project was to improve the management of one of Cerdanya's most important natural resources through a joint strategy so as to enhance water quality and the riparian ecosystems. In the same Interreg IIIA Programme, another project was approved to decontaminate the Carol River's waters, and in 2009 the treatment plant of Latour de Carol in Haute Cerdagne was built.

## The case study of Cerdanya

### Geographical framework



### Historical region



### Current administrative subdivisions

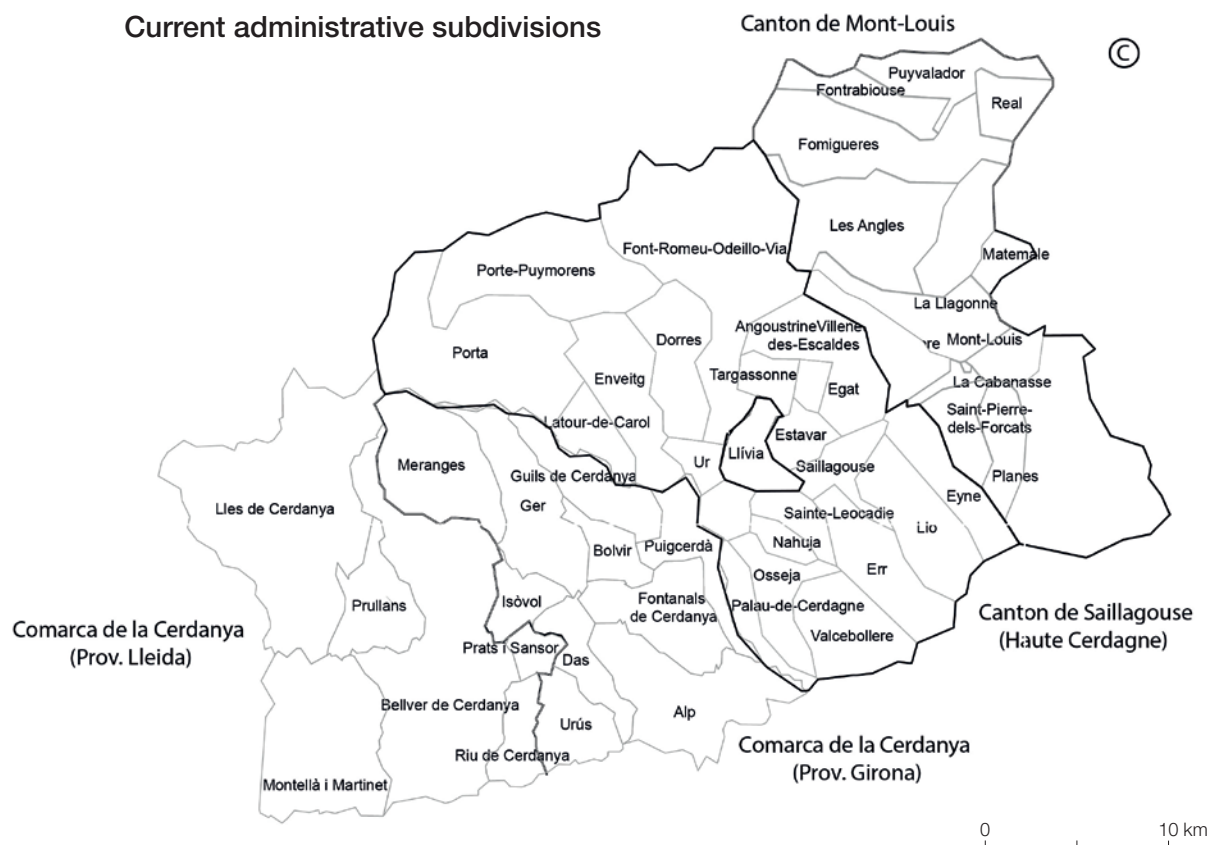


Fig. 2: The case study of Cerdanya in the geographical framework (A), the historical region (B) and current administrative subdivisions (C)



Local economy is also supported by cross-border cooperation. During the Poctefa (Programme Opérationnel de Coopération Territoriale Espagne-France-Andorra) 2007–2013, the MTC (Matadero Transfronterizo de la Cerdanya) was approved to build a joint slaughterhouse in Ur in Haute Cerdagne. The new infrastructure provides a common plant for Cerdan breeders to support the local meat industry with an estimated production of about 900 tons per year. In this way, the livestock would not have to be sent out of Cerdanya, as Cerdan breeders currently do, thus completing the meat cycle within the valley. Moreover, farmers will have the opportunity to slaughter their own meat for domestic consumption or small retail sale. The construction of the joint slaughterhouse, which stopped for several years due to lack of Spanish funding, will be concluded in 2017. In the tourism sector, since 2010 the Consell Comarcal Cerdanya and the Communauté de Communes Pyrénées-Cerdagne are cooperating to coordinate the touristic promotion of the entire valley. The same institution also received Interreg IIIA funding for enhancing the ancient Romanic Route. In order to field in order to reduce the phenomenon of seasonality, alternative initiatives have been jointly set up. One example is the 215km running competition Gran Volta de la Cerdanya, a mountain circuit attracting every year many international athletes.

Today the health sector is a prime example of CBC in Cerdanya. Historically, the main hospital of the valley was in Puigcerdà, but for the Haute Cerdagne's population, the facilities were located in Prades, (60 km away from the valley) or in Perpignan (100 km). Despite the geographical proximity, cross-border flows to Puigcerdà's hospital were scarce mainly because of the 'psychological barrier' that the French had toward the Spanish health-care system, which was considered qualitatively worse than the French one (MONCÚS 2005). But in 1996 and 2001 when the road connection between the Haute Cerdagne and Prades was cut respectively due to a landslide and heavy snowfall, these extraordinary events created

the fortuitous opportunity to change the previous perception (OLIVERAS 2013). Regional and local authorities considered the idea of building a new joint hospital. The successful feasibility study, which was funded by the Interreg IIIA and led to the proposal of the executive project in the Poctefa 2007–2013 Programme, received around EUR 18 Million in funding. In 2010 the status of EGTC Hospital de la Cerdanya was adopted, simplifying many bureaucratic and legal issues. The hospital opened its doors in September 2014 and the first official statistics seems encouraging. Until February 2015, 21.6 % of admitted patients came from the French side, as well as 15 % of the emergencies and 18 % of diagnostic tests. Beyond the mere infrastructure, the EGTC Hospital the Cerdanya promotes the creation of a healthcare functional area by coordinating health facilities and the socio-sanitary structures of the valley (BERZI a. DURA 2015).

Regarding spatial planning, the Cross-border Landscape Plan has been adopted in 2013. The initiative, which was financed by the Eurodistrict's Micro-Project Fund, involves many agents (the EGTC Pirineus-Cerdanya, the Llívia City Council, the Landscape Observatory of Catalonia and the French Parc Naturel Régional des Pyrénées Catalanes). The Plan provides concrete actions for promoting a long-term territorial strategy based on landscape values (OBSERVATORI DEL PAISATGE DE CATALUNYA 2013). It addresses the economic, social and institutional stakeholders of Cerdanya's French and Spanish sides. This initiative can be an effective cross-border management tool to support local endogenous development.

### **The Coast of Albera Marítima: Between Common Heritage and Socioeconomic Divergences**

The Coast of Albera Marítima, which could be defined as a geographical unit that is easily detectable in the wider regional context, is enclosed by the easternmost prolongation of the Pyrenees and the Gulf of Lion. The case study involves eleven municipalities: seven belonging to French Canton de la Côte Vermeille (Argelès sur

Mer, Port-Vendres, Collioure, Banyuls sur Mer and Cerbère) in the Département des Pyrénées Orientales (Región Occitanie Pyrénées-Méditerranée) and six Catalan municipalities of the northern Costa Brava (Portbou, Colera, Llançà, El Port de la Selva, Cadaqués and Roses) belonging to the Comarca de l'Alt Empordà. The coastline, which is shaped by morphological, climatic (mistral and tramontane winds) and marine factors (Liguro-Provençal current), is almost entirely rocky and hardly accessible. Therefore, the historical anthropization needed to be modified in order to adapt to this particular and complex environment. Local communities reshaped the maritime slopes with vineyard and olive plantations. During the first half of the 1800s, terracing was the characteristic landscape (BARBAZA 1966). A key element for studying the local milieu involves the maritime activities. Traditionally, economic, social and cultural exchanges were developed through coasting trade, i.e. cabotage. When consulting local literature (RAHOLA a. RAHOLA 1976; PRAT et al. 2006), we learned that historical trade relations emerged, especially between Collioure, Cadaques and El Port de la Selva. CAM's fishermen shared the same fishing techniques and they still benefit today from the historical fishing rights that were established in 1967<sup>3</sup>. Our interview with the Head of Fishermen's Association of Port de la Selva (Confraria de Pescadors) reveals that the relations between the fishermen of the two sides of Albera are good and no significant historical and current conflicts have been recorded. The geographical isolation played an important role in the conservation of the local milieu, which remained almost unchanged despite the international division between France and Spain. However, since the last quarter of the 1800s, important external factors induced significant changes to the local milieu. In 1879 the phylloxera pest ravaged grapevines all over the Albera, which led to the extinction of local vineyards. Thereafter, the

<sup>3</sup> Council Regulation (EC) No 2371/2002 of 20 December 2002 on the conservation and sustainable exploitation of fisheries resources under the Common Fisheries Policy, Annex I.



Spanish and French states adopted two different strategies. The French replanted and greatly improved the quality of winemaking, thereby establishing the current certifications of controlled designations of origin for this region known as Banyuls AOC and Collioure AOC. On the Southern side, vineyards have been abandoned due to the creation of a sanitary cordon to avoid the proliferation of phylloxera to the South (IGLESIES 1968). Nowadays the border marks the drastic interruption of vineyards and olive grove terraces between the two sides (Fig. 3). In 1878 the international rail connection between the

two countries was inaugurated, and the different track gauges (GIMENEZ-CAPDEVILA 2012) led to a functional specialisation of Cerbère and Portbou's economies. In 1939, during La Retirada, the exile of Spanish Republicans after the victory of General Franco's army brought about a strong depopulation in several Southern Albaras's villages. On Argeles sur Mer's beaches concentration camps were set up for the exiles. In 1962 Algeria's independence brought about the arrival of circa 10.000 *pieds-noirs* (French-Algerian exiles) in Port-Vendres. Most were fishermen, who settled along the coast

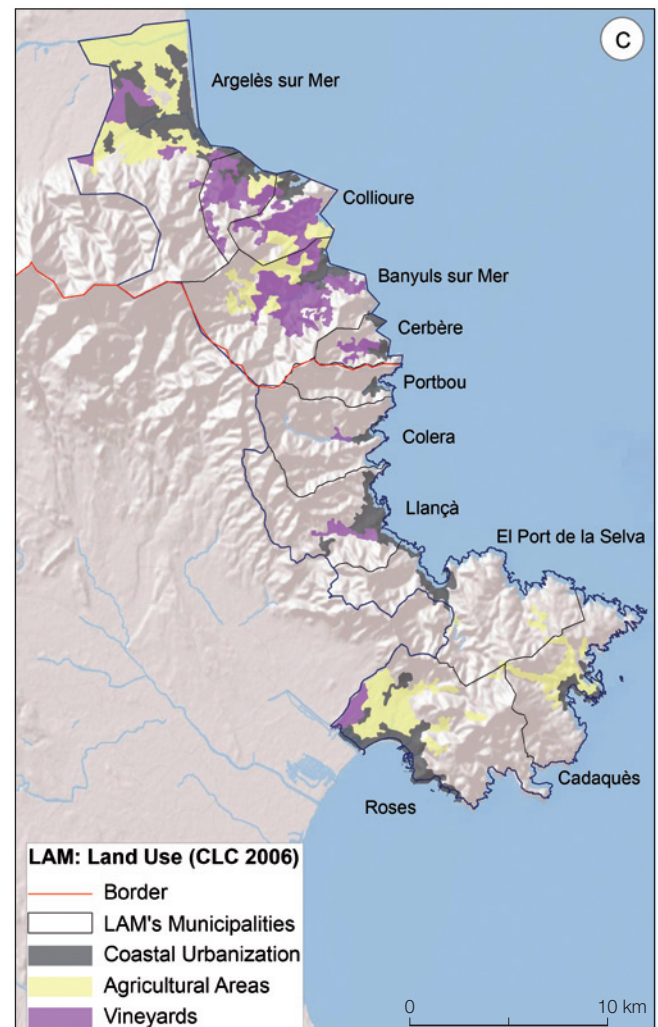
of Albera. They introduced more invasive techniques and began fishing for new species, i.e. tuna. This situation increased the competition among local fishermen. The activity switched from traditional to industrial, threatening the marine environment and changing social and cultural values (BOUBA 2009). Nowadays the fishery economy between the two sides of Albera is very different. Comparing French and Catalan statistical data (IFREMER 2014; IDESCAT 2015) on fleets, employment and the quantity and value of catches, the Southern side is much more competitive than its Northern counterpart.

## The Coast of Albera Marítima

### Geographical localization



### Current urban and agricultural land use



### Environmental protection and geopolitical framework

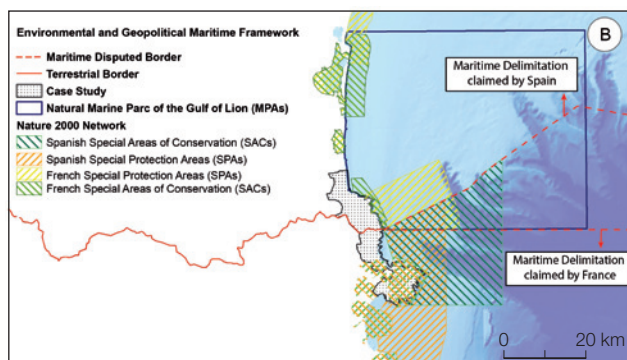


Fig. 3: the Coast of Albera Marítima. Geographical localization (A), Environmental protection and geopolitical framework (B), Current urban and agricultural Land Use (C)

Tourism is undoubtedly the most important activity of the CAM. It started during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century attracting many elite tourists and artists, especially in Collioure (*les Fauves* group) and Cadaqués (like Salvador Dalí and Pablo Picasso). During the 1960s, mass tourism gradually invaded the CAM, bringing radical changes in traditional economies, human landscape and threatening many habitats and the biodiversity (BARBAZA 1966). In both sides of the Albera, touristic development led to a strong coastal urbanisation. Touristic activities currently produce significant social and environmental pressures (GÓMEZ et al. 2006; LLORET a. RIVERA 2008). The analysis of the coastal land use (500 m from the coastline) shows an important urban pressure (40 % on the Côte Vermeille and 30 % on the southern side), in which second residences have a considerable impact (40 %). The highest number of accommodations can be found in the municipalities of Roses and Argelès-sur-mer. The former specialises in hotels and attracts many international tourists, especially French tourists from Toulouse. The latter municipality developed camping tourism and hosts more national visitors. According to the Councillor for Tourism and to the Mayors we interviewed (Argelès, Roses, Portbou and Llançà), the competitive attitude in tourism has generally prevailed over cooperation, especially in the private sector. In summary, the Coast of Albera Marítima presents complex historical and socio-economic dynamics that have significantly reduced local cross-border interaction and impoverished the local milieu along the Coast of Albera Marítima. Nevertheless, since the 1980s local administrations have been trying to develop new cross-border networks.

### **The Discontinuity of Institutional Cross-Border Cooperation**

Cross-border institution-building is characterized by a strong discontinuity. In 1982 the municipality of Cerdère, Portvendres, Banyuls, Collioure, Portbou Llançà and Port de la Selva launched the first association (Associació Cap de Creus-Cap

San Vicenç) for promoting cultural and sportive linkages between the two sides of the Albera. One result was the enhancement of the maritime heritage with the establishment of the typical Catalan rowing competition (Llagut) in 1997. Five years later it became a regional competition for the whole Catalan rowing teams. Despite this success, the cross-border association was abandoned due to a lack of local political interest. In 2007 there was an official attempt to bring it back by the Mayor of Portbou, but neighbouring municipalities did not support this attempt. In 2013 another interesting and wider initiative was promoted by 26 municipalities (13 on each side) with the cooperation between the Catalan consortium Terra de Pas (literally, Association Land of Passage, CTP) and the Communauté de Communes Albère-Côte Vermeille (CCACV). Their main purpose was to develop joint projects for sustainable tourism (trekking routes, new touristic labels, etc.), especially making use of Interreg funds. However, in 2014, the institution was dissolved by Catalan partners. According to our interviews with the former president of CTP, the main reason was the implementation of the Spanish Reform for Local Administration (LRSAL), which obligated the biggest municipality of the consortiums to assume all the management costs. The longest cross-border institution was the voluntary Associació Albera Viva (AAV). Founded in 1991, the association studies and raises awareness for a natural and cultural common heritage. It joined the 28 municipalities of the two sides of the Albera Massif. Like in Cerdanya, the AAV promoted the *Diada de l'Albera*. Since 2002 almost 30 cross-border seminars were organised and addressed common territorial heritage: history, archaeology, marine environment, fishery, agriculture, etc. These meetings promoted discussions on important common issues for local development, such as fire prevention, the impact of the high-speed train connection (AVE) and the awareness of the Eurodistrict of the Catalan Cross-border Space. The Association was officially dissolved in 2013. In their last document

(ASSOCIATION ALBERA VIVA 2014), the AAVV stated that two local public agencies, the CCACV and the Pays Pyrénées Méditerranée (PPM) are already supporting local cross-border cooperation in the Albera. Indeed the latter is currently a key player in the local cross-border cooperation process along the Eastern Pyrenees. The PPM has recently introduced a Cross-Border Multi-Level Governance Committee to engage local, regional and national stakeholders in order to support and coordinate local cross-border instances towards the next Poctefa 2014–2020. According to interviews with 13 local stakeholders, during the first months of 2015, 70 % of respondents point out that a joint association, such as the EGTC, is perceived as an administrative burden. Moreover, most of them ignore European best practices as well as the potential benefits. Therefore, it seems that cross-border institution-building process is far from being conceived as a feasible local territorial strategy.

### **The Unfeasible Cross-Border Cooperation**

The analysis of the Interreg's projects shows the lack of joint initiatives. With the last EU Programmes, (Interreg III-A 2000–2006 and Poctefa 2007–2013), the local actors did not participate as partners or leaders. Also their activity in the Micro-Project Funds is minimal. When consulting the list of projects provided by the representative of Catalan government in Perpignan (Casa de la Generalitat), we learned that out of a hundred projects, just one affects the case study area, which involves the touristic enhancement of the ancient maritime cabotage routes. It was based on the *liaison* between a private navigation company of l'Escala (a municipality of Costa Brava) and the municipality of Port-Vendres. It was abandoned after the inauguration due to the lack of institutional and financial support. Interviews show that competitive attitudes in tourism still prevail on cooperation, especially for the private sector. However, coastal municipalities are currently preparing a cross-border project based on

a joint touristic initiative, endorsed by the PPM Cross-Border Committee in the Poctefa 2014–2020 programme.

An interesting initiative was the campaign for becoming a UNESCO International World Heritage site called *The Two sides of the Mediterranean Pyrenees*, which was promoted by the Consell Comarcal de l'Alt Empordà and the PPM in 2006. The campaign was based on the concept of an integrated and unique cross-border human landscape. The adoption of the EGTC status was selected for the joint governance of 64,000 ha, which covers the whole uplands of the Albera and the coastal zone (CASTELL 2006). In the end, the initiative was withdrawn by the Spanish government, stating that they needed to improve some weak aspects of the campaign, i.e. cross-border linkages and the shared cultural heritage, before the final judgment. At the same time, they feared that a rejection by evaluators would compromise future applications. Therefore, it has never been proposed again.

CAM is also embroiled in French-Spanish maritime border dispute. Since the seventies, the maritime boundary delimitation between France and Spain is still controversial (FARAMIÑÁN GILBERT a. GUTIÉRREZ CASTILLO 2007, p. 314). Interestingly, both countries have recently established new marine protected areas along their claimed maritime border. On the one hand, the French Ministry of the Environment declared the establishment of the Parc Naturel Marin Golf du Lion in 2014. On the other hand, the Spanish government, declared two new Nature 2000 sites in 2015 (The Empordà's Sea as Special Protection Areas and The Submarine Canyons of Cap de Creus as Special Areas of Conservation). However the Spanish and the French protected areas partially overlap along the contested maritime boundary. We could hypothesise that the establishment of natural protected areas could serve as geopolitical interests of the states, which seek to control strategic environmental resources (GUYOT a. SEPÚLVEDA, 2014). Such a hypothesis would require conducting further research. Nevertheless, we can state that

this partial overlapping was generated by a lack of coordination between the competent authorities. Indeed since 2008, both the Spanish and French governments have been negotiating the establishment of a Transboundary Marine Protected Area (TMPA). It would include a large marine space (10,000 km<sup>2</sup>) in the Gulf of Lion and protect more than 1,500–2,000 species, which would present the most biodiversity among all 25 Marine Protected Areas in the world. Unfortunately, once again, after the official meeting in Collioure in 2009, no progress has been recorded. Nevertheless, we think that the project of a transboundary protected area could solve the geopolitical problem and, at the same time, have a positive impact on environmental conservation.

### Comparative Discussion

The analysis of the two case studies provides important elements for a brief comparative discussion. First we start with some considerations regarding each case.

The cross-border micro-region of Cerdanya is an emblematic case study. The local and academic literature review revealed the presence of strong geographical, socio-economic and cultural similarities between the Haute Cerdagne and the Baixa Cerdanya. The common local *milieu* has been maintained by local communities by means of socio-economic and cultural cross-border interactions. Since the 1980s local administrations have implemented many joint initiatives to tackle important common issues, such as water management and health-care services, and enhance the common *milieu*. Together with financial and legal support from the EU, the implementation of the multi-level governance system, provide effectiveness and sustainability to the local CBC. New infrastructures, such as the slaughterhouse and the hospital, the promotion of cultural and social initiatives as well as the joint governance of the landscape contributes to reducing the effect of mental, psychological and socio-cultural barriers still existing between the two sides of Cerdanya. Nevertheless, local cross-border integration initiatives are

still far from being implemented due to the lack of CBC in important sectors, such as winter tourism, education and transport (OLIVERAS 2013; BERZI 2016).

The Coast of Albera Marítima (CAM) is more peripheral than Cerdanya due to geographical and morphological factors. Moreover, the borderland's *milieu* has undergone a process of socioeconomic and cultural differentiation that had been caused by severe external factors (the phylloxera of grapevines, the new railway connection, the arrival of the *pieds-noirs*, the Republican exile, mass tourism, etc.). Today both sides are threatened by similar problems. However, almost every attempt of local CBC to resolve such common threats, such as touristic pressure on the fragile coastal and maritime ecosystems and the decline of artisanal fishery, faded away and no long-term results were achieved. Therefore, it seems difficult to conceive local CBC as a feasible territorial strategy. The cooperation should improve the institutional capacities of the local agents as well as appease the competitive attitude of local stakeholders. As with the case of Cerdanya, regional and national authorities should coordinate and be more engaged in the issues concerning the region of the Albera.

Some overall considerations can now be argued. Firstly, the analysis shows that, in both cases, historically the border was not conceived as a barrier by local communities, rather it represents an important economic resource (O'Dowd 2001). The presence of the border does not lead to the disintegration of local relations. Rather this was due mainly to the intervention as well as non-intervention of national authorities. Secondly, in both cases, the differences became more remarkable by the end of the nineteenth century with the emerging socioeconomic and cultural differentiations of the Pyrenean borderlands. However, Cerdanya's local communities maintained stronger interactions than those of the Albera, wherein such relations were rather limited by topographical and geographical constraints (the reliefs, the rocky coast and the sea). The best example is the



comparison between the two borderland landscapes: the drastic interruption of vineyards and olive groves terraces in Albera is counterpoised with the more homogeneous Cerdan enclosure. Thirdly, local CBC represents a feasible territorial strategy when community-led initiatives find regional and national support and multi-level governance is adopted. Cerdanya's local proactivity is opposed to CAM's competitive attitudes, whereby a lack of mutual trust still prevails. Indeed the ambitious projects of environmental preservation, such as the aforementioned campaign to become recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage site, did not receive enough support from regional and national institutions (unlike the case of Hospital de la Cerdanya, which was endorsed by both the Catalan government and the French Health Ministry). Fourthly, in both cases local CBC had a similar kick-off in promoting institutional initiatives, even though in Cerdanya, it evolved into a stable and successful practice, obtaining several Interreg funds. However, in CAM, despite all the efforts, the development of cross-border cooperation dynamics is still hard to achieve.

## Conclusions

This contribution applies the Territorialist Approach to analyse cross-border cooperation in two peripheral borderlands across the Eastern French-Spanish border. We think that the cyclical conception of the territory represents an important analytical contribution towards explaining the processes of the territorialisation, de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation of borderlands, according to the geographical, cultural and historical perspective. Borderlands display a specific local *milieu*, identity and common heritage that have been affected by the development of border functions and by the changes in national, international and sub-national policies. Nevertheless, borderlanders have been able, over time, to adapt themselves and take advantage of the presence of the border. In the current European space, cross-border cooperation is effectively becoming a

territorial strategy for many peripheral borderlands. The evolutions of EU policies from above as well as local and regional initiatives from below are converging towards new models of cross-border territorial management. Two case studies conducted along the French-Spanish border have been compared and analysed: the valley of Cerdanya and the coast of Albera Marítima, which are both located across the eastern Pyrenees. In both cases, the analysis shows the presence of a social, economic and cultural territorial capital that persisted over time, despite the presence of boundary. Furthermore, we discovered a borderland milieu that is characterized by its own cultural, socioeconomic and aesthetic values, such as its landscape.

The case of Cerdanya's CBC demonstrates how community-led initiatives, based on local needs and on the shared territorial capital, could represent a feasible alternative for local development: on an endogenous level, based on its uniqueness and exclusivity, and a cross-border level, by creating joint projects, plans and new shared institutions. However, in analysing the case study of the Albera, we found that the marked absence of a stable cross-border network and feasible project exacerbates its geographic remoteness and the anthropic pressures on the fragile environment. The absence of regional and national institutional involvement and the consequent lack of multi-level governance threaten the sustainability of cooperation.

According to this approach, the borderland *milieu* represents a very important factor for initiating an endogenous local development for peripheral borderlands. Through this empirical study, three important meanings of the concept of *milieu* can be advanced. Firstly, the milieu as heritage, referred to as the territorial capital inherited by previous territorialisation cycles (Turco 1988). It involves the tangible as well as the intangible realms, in which the border constitutes the core element. Secondly, the milieu is an important economic catalyst activated by local communities to support the traditional

economic activities, tourism, public services, etc. It has non-repeatability propriety because the local milieu is unique and exclusive for each territory (GOVERNA 1997). Finally, the milieu represents a powerful "unexploited deposit", on which innovative territorial strategies could be designed and implemented towards a potentially effective and sustainable cross-border integration.

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PhD Candidate Matteo Berzi  
Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB)  
Department of Geography  
Campus Bellaterra, Edifici B  
E-08193 Cerdanyola del Valles  
Spain  
[matteo.berzi@uab.cat](mailto:matteo.berzi@uab.cat)

## Резюме

МАТТЕО БЕРЦИ

**Местное трансграничное сотрудничество как территориальная стратегия для приграничных регионов? Два тематических ключевых исследования на восточной границе между Францией и Испанией с использованием территориального подхода**

Статья посвящена территориальному подходу в области пространственного развития для исследования трансграничного сотрудничества в двух областях, расположенных вдоль восточной франко-испанской границы. Территориальный подход является новым, междисциплинарным и культурно-географически ориентированным подходом к исследованиям по пространственному развитию, имеющим свои корни в итальянской школе географии. Согласно этому подходу, «территория» определяется как результат длительного циклического процесса взаимодействия антропогенных поселений и окружающей среды, причём каждая цивилизация сохраняет ряд материальных (артефакты) и нематериальных (смыслы, ценности и символы) памятников, способствующих формированию местных взаимоотношений и локальной идентичности (среды). Поэтому приграничные регионы рассматриваются как сложные пространственные единицы, в которых географические, социально-экономические и культурные модели поведения находились под влиянием развития пограничных функций и изменений национальной, международной и региональной политики. В этом смысле трансграничные сети, как формально, так и неформально вносят свой вклад в поддержание общей локальной среды. В то же время в Европе, трансграничное сотрудничество усиливается посредством политических, финансовых и правовых мер поддержки. Оно обеспечивает для местных акторов пути к разработке совместных мер по эндогенному укреплению приграничных территорий. В этом отношении локальная среда является весьма важным фактором для развития на местном уровне. Оба ключевых исследования проводились в Серданье/*Cerdanya* и на побережье Альбера Маритима/*Albera Marítima*. Исследование в Серданье показывает, каким образом инициативы на местном уровне, базирующиеся на локальных потребностях и общем пространственном капитале, представляют собой жизнеспособную альтернативу для локального развития. Альбера/*Albera* географически расположена более периферийно, причём отсутствие трансграничных локальных сетей, с одной стороны, и осуществимых проектов трансграничного сотрудничества, с другой, усиливают её географическую изолированность и антропогенное давление на прибрежную зону.

*Трансграничное сотрудничество; пограничная территория; территориальный подход; Сердань; Albera Marítima; среда; местное эндогенное развитие*

## Résumé

MATTEO BERZI

**La coopération transfrontalière locale est-elle une stratégie territoriale pour les régions frontalières périphériques? Analyse de deux études de cas le long de la frontière franco-espagnole orientale à l'aide de l'approche territorialiste**

Cette contribution met en application l'approche territorialiste (AT) afin d'analyser la coopération transfrontalière dans deux zones situées le long de la frontière orientale franco-espagnole. LAT est une approche des études territoriales innovante, multidisciplinaire et orientée vers la culture, qui trouve ses origines dans l'école italienne de géographie. Selon cette approche, le « territoire » est perçu comme le résultat d'un processus cyclique ancien d'interaction entre les implantations humaines et l'environnement, par lequel chaque civilisation « stocke » un ensemble de biens matériels (artefacts) ainsi que des biens immatériels (sens, valeurs et symboles) qui animent les relations locales et forment l'identité locale (le milieu). Par conséquent, nous considérons les territoires transfrontaliers comme des unités territoriales complexes, dans lesquelles les schémas géographiques, socio-économiques et culturels ont été affectés par l'évolution des fonctions de la frontière et par les changements dans les politiques nationales, internationales et infranationales. En ce sens, des réseaux locaux transfrontaliers, à la fois formels et informels, contribuent à maintenir un *milieu* local partagé. Dans le même temps, en Europe, la coopération transfrontalière (CTF) locale est stimulée par des processus d'intégration européenne apportant un soutien politique, financier et juridique. Elle représente pour les agents locaux une opportunité de développement des actions communes permettant le renforcement endogène de la zone frontalière. En ce sens, le milieu local représente un facteur très important pour générer un développement local. Les deux études de cas ont été menées en Basse-Cerdagne et sur la côte de l'Albère maritime (CAM). Notre analyse de la Basse-Cerdagne montre en quoi les initiatives menées par la communauté, basées sur les besoins locaux et le capital territorial partagé, représentent une alternative possible pour le développement local. Le cas de l'Albère est géographiquement encore plus périphérique, en ce que l'absence de réseaux locaux transfrontaliers stables, d'une part, et de projets de CTF possibles, d'autre part, exacerbe son éloignement géographique et les pressions anthropiques sur l'environnement côtier fragile.

*Coopération transfrontalière; région frontalière; approche territorialiste; Basse-Cerdagne; Albère maritime; milieu; développement local endogène*